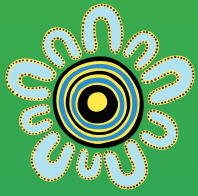


2023 *Year  
in  
Review*







# Acknowledgement of Country

The Disability Trust recognises and acknowledges the unique and diverse cultures and languages of the continuing Custodians of the unceded Countries and Nations on which we provide services, including Ngunnawal, Ngambri/ Kamberri, Yuggera, Turrbal, Yugambah, Yuin, Ngarigo, Worimi, Awabakal, Dharawal/ Tharawal, Gundungurra/ Gandangara/ Gundungura, Gadigal, Bidjigal/Bedegal, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Bunurong/ Buun Wurrung, Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Countries.

We would like to pay respects to the oldest living culture, the Traditional Custodians who have continued to care for this land for over 65,000 years. We acknowledge Elders who have an enduring connection to Country, it serves as a testament to their deep and unbroken relationship with this land. We pay homage to Elders who have passed, offer our allyship to present Elders and support emerging leaders. We recognise that their wisdom and knowledge hold the keys to a harmonious relationship with this land, and we commit to walking this reconciliation journey together.

This land was never ceded. It was, and always will be, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land. We acknowledge the profound importance of recognising this historical truth and commit ourselves to truth-telling. We embrace the rich tapestry of over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages, and traditions that have thrived here for millennia. We are committed to listening to the voices of the First Nations Peoples, hearing their stories, and learning so we do not repeat the past.

**The Disability Trust continues our reconciliation journey with our First Nations Peoples working towards a more inclusive world.**



Illawarra-based Indigenous artist LaToya Kennedy who was commissioned to produce The Disability Trust's RAP artwork in 2022.









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## Message from the CEO

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Our clients' success stories and their shared journeys of resilience and achievement have been the true testament to our collective impact.



Firstly, I am pleased to report it has been another positive year at The Disability Trust. We have continued to strongly focus on our mission of 'creating an inclusive world', with so many highlights which you will have the pleasure of reading in this report.

We are privileged to support more than 4000 people at The Trust, and we employ just less than 2000 staff. Our dedicated staff continue to impress with their passion and commitment to their work, and it is a real joy to us when we can support people with disability to go from strength to strength in their lives.

A highlight for us this year was the announcement by a Victorian provider, OC Connections, of its intention to merge with The Trust. The CEO of OC Connections, Therese Desmond, has been in talks for some months, discussing the potential benefits of our organisations joining forces, and I am so pleased this possible merger is coming to fruition. OC Connections is considerably smaller than The Trust, but our missions closely align, and we will be very proud of our association moving forward.

One of our proudest achievements was the launch of the IncludeAbility Pilot. This initiative, undertaken in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission, has focused on the importance of people with disability securing access to meaningful, long-term employment, underscoring our ethos of seeing every individual achieve their potential. Through this pilot, The Disability Trust has partnered with different employers, both local and national,

to create opportunities for new jobs for people with disability. We are very appreciative of the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission and our employment partners involved in this project.

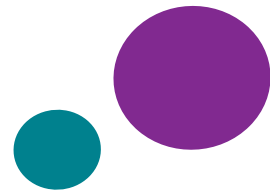
Another highlight was the official opening of KidsWish House, a state-of-the-art facility in Flinders, NSW, designed to offer children and adults with disability a space where they can access essential services, engage in programs, and partake in fun events. Our merger with KidzWish has enabled us to offer many events and programs throughout the year, specifically focused on creating great experiences for children and young people with disability.

Furthermore, co-presenting alongside Alice Patten (a First Nations parent of one of the young people we support at The Trust) at the DSC NDIS Conference, I had the privilege to spotlight The Trust's impactful work in reinforcing the importance of culturally safe services for First Nations people with disability.

The outcome of the Voice Referendum was a disappointment for The Trust. However, we will continue with unwavering commitment to work with First Nations friends, colleagues and partner organisations to create great opportunities and experiences for First Nations people with disability and their families.

Considering a whole of sector perspective, in Australia, disability service providers operating under the NDIS face a multifaceted array of sector risks. Primary among these is the challenge of maintaining





financial viability and sustainability, as the nature of NDIS funding structures and an ever-changing pricing and policy environment has taken its toll on many providers. However, The Trust has managed to navigate some of these challenges, and we remain optimistic about the future.

The Final Report of the Disability Royal Commission was released this year. The Disability Royal Commission, established in April 2019, was a direct response to the overwhelming community concern regarding reports of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation endured by people with disability. Utilising a multi-pronged approach, the commission actively engaged in research, held public hearings, took in personal experiences through submissions and

hosted private sessions and other forums to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by people with disability in the Australian community.

The topics of investigation centred on developing strategies to prevent violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, devising best practices for reporting and responding to such incidents, and fostering an inclusive society where people with disability can have their rights, in every aspect of their lives, upheld.

The Trust contributed to the Final Report of the Disability Royal Commission, where we were quoted around the importance of people with disability having a voice in their services, and in the community more broadly.

In conclusion, I am very proud of everything we have achieved this year. It has been a very positive one for our organisation. Our dedicated team has demonstrated unwavering commitment to delivering quality services, and their efforts have not gone unnoticed by our community and stakeholders.

Collaborative endeavours with partners, new and old, have strengthened our position and enabled us to extend our reach to even more individuals. Our clients' success stories and their shared journeys of resilience and achievement have been the true testament to our collective impact.

I would like to thank the Board of The Trust for their unwavering and consistent support.

Dr Peter Langkamp, our Chair, has been a fantastic supporter for us and we are very grateful. I would also like to thank our passionate and highly skilled staff who are committed to supporting people with disability achieve their goals. I extend my sincere thanks to our leadership team who inspire and support their teams to further the mission of The Trust.

As we move forward, it's clear the foundation we've laid this year will pave the way for continued growth and innovation. I am very proud of what we have accomplished and am optimistic about the future.

Sincerely

*Carol Berry* / Chief Executive Officer





# Chairperson's Report

It has been another positive year for The Disability Trust and, on behalf of the Board, I wish to thank the many people, families and supporters who have selected The Disability Trust to support you to lead the life you choose. We also thank our CEOs, Margaret Bowen (to January 2023) and Carol Berry, the leadership team and the many staff who are committed to the cause.

And we extend a warm welcome to new members who have joined our vibrant and expanding organisation in 2023. The commitment and dedication of our team comprising members, directors, management and staff improve the lives of people with disability that is the cornerstone of our organisation. Together we continue to create an inclusive, empowered future.

In 2023 we bid farewell to Margaret Bowen, who led our organisation for 35 years. Her leadership, passion and dedication to the disability sector has been commendable. Margaret's vision and tenacity shaped the trajectory of this organisation, ensuring we stayed true to our core mission. The countless lives she has touched and the positive changes she has driven within the disability community are a testament to her outstanding contribution.

But as one chapter ended, another one started and we were pleased to welcome Carol Berry as our new CEO. Carol brings with her an inspiring vision and commitment that aligns seamlessly with our organisation's values. The Board are confident that under her leadership, The Disability Trust will continue to further its mission, ensuring every individual has the opportunity to live in an inclusive community in the manner they desire.

In the past year, our commitment to enhancing and expanding our services has seen substantial growth. I am pleased to report we have successfully acquired four new properties. Each one has been carefully selected to offer a welcoming and suitable

environment for our clients, while also ensuring easy accessibility and integration into the broader community. Additionally, understanding the need for a stable operational base that resonates with our vision, The Trust procured 5 Edney Lane, Spring Hill as our permanent head office. This is a strategic acquisition that not only consolidates our administrative functions but also underlines our drive and vision for the future.

In July we held our Members' Breakfast. This event not only provided a chance for members to come together in a spirit of community and mutual support, but it was an occasion for The Trust to update everyone on our current and future activities. The exchange of ideas and feedback was valuable. Hearing first-hand from those we serve about what matters most reinforces our commitment and direction. We are reminded that fostering open communication channels strengthens our community and ensures our actions align with the needs and aspirations of those we serve.

In the past financial year, our organisation demonstrated operational and investment prudence, delivering a better than forecast financial outcome. This was achieved through a focus on what matters in delivering services to clients and improvements in operational productivity. Our strong balance sheet enables us to further invest in disability service provision and business transformation while continuing to make a difference to the lives of so many. It almost goes without saying that this positive trajectory speaks to the dedication and commitment of our team and underscores the trust and belief the community has in our mission.

As a Board, we look forward to the coming year with a sense of optimism and determination.

Sincerely,

*Dr Peter Langkamp* / Chairperson





## IncludeAbility Illawarra

IncludeAbility Illawarra is a pioneering initiative that fosters inclusivity in the workplace for individuals with disability. With committed support from The Australian Human Rights Commission, The Disability Trust and the local community, IncludeAbility Illawarra has made substantial strides in supporting employers and people with disability.

IncludeAbility Illawarra has been at the forefront of inclusion efforts, and its impact is undeniable. The Disability Trust has extended its support to more than 50 Illawarra-based employers, as well as interstate local councils and national organisations. The Trust has been instrumental in helping employers develop, update and implement disability inclusion action plans and new policies that promote inclusivity. Their guidance and expertise have empowered employers to create environments where everyone can thrive.

More than 30 local individuals with disability have secured long-term, meaningful employment thanks to the support from The Disability Trust and the openness of employers willing to make a difference. These opportunities create financial stability and a sense of purpose and belonging.



**It's heartwarming to witness the transformative power of inclusivity in workplaces. We are dedicated to improving the lives of people with disability by securing meaningful employment and creating an inclusive world.**



One shining example of this transformation can be seen by the efforts of Kmart after The Disability Trust and Australian Human Rights Commission hosted training sessions with more than 30 employees in March for the IncludeAbility Illawarra Pilot Program. These sessions addressed ways to encourage work confidence, job customisation and building team culture for everyone to feel included.

The Figtree, Shellharbour and Nowra Kmart staff adjusted onboarding processes by adapting a casual interview style, fast-tracking the paperwork and providing flexibility around online training and store induction.

Kmart committed to employing three permanent part-time employees and went on to employ seven employees.

IncludeAbility Illawarra's accomplishments are a testament to the unwavering support and collaboration of The Australian Human Rights Commission, The Disability Trust and the local community.

A significant aspect of IncludeAbility Illawarra's work is the invaluable contribution of our ambassador, Dr Dinesh Palipana, who has played a pivotal role in facilitating bimonthly community of practice meetings, creating a nurturing environment where employers can share experiences.

"It's been a privilege to serve as an ambassador for IncludeAbility Illawarra," he said. "Together, we've built bridges within the community and among employers, fostering knowledge sharing and positive change."

The achievements of IncludeAbility Illawarra, amplified by his dedication, highlight the power of collaboration. Through their tireless efforts, they've reshaped the landscape of disability employment.



**CLICK TO WATCH THE INCLUDEABILITY VIDEO**





# Celebrating 30 Years of Sport & Recreation

The Disability Trust reached an important milestone in 2023 with the 30-year anniversary of Sport & Recreation programs in the Illawarra. The Disability Trust's Sport & Recreation services were established in 1993 to create an opportunity for people with disability to access opportunities to engage in sports, make friends and try new things.

Jammers Basketball, Altogether Drama and the gym programs were part of the original services and remain popular today.

An expanded range of programs was offered to meet demand including indoor cricket, tennis, art & craft, Score Dragons (rugby league), camp, Fitness 4 All, Music Makers, Star Dancers, Mischief Makers, bowling, White Knights FC (soccer), Swim 4 Fun, Sunday Funday and Finally it's Friday (social groups),





MasterChef, vacation care, after school care, Getaway Saturday and BlueScope WIN Sports Ready.

Trusted Travel was a further exciting addition to services in 2015.

These programs have assisted participants to develop their sporting and recreational skills in a supportive setting. They have fostered lifelong friendships and connections, including two marriages as a result of couples meeting each other at our programs!

Since Sport & Recreation Services commenced, participants have been able to take part in their chosen activity on a weekly basis, with an emphasis on all programs being in the local community to promote and create inclusion. These programs have become a base for representative teams for basketball and soccer on a regional, state and national level. Over the past few years employment opportunities have opened up for our drama participants through our partnership with Merrigong Theatre Company.

Since its inception, The Disability Trust has set up similar services in Sydney, Campbelltown, Canberra, Queanbeyan, Melbourne and the Shoalhaven regions. This year also saw the establishment of the Score Bears rugby league program on the Gold Coast.

**We're looking forward to seeing where the next 30 years takes us!**



The best part of the service has been the connection developed between participants and staff members across all programs. It's great to see the staff go above and beyond to ensure we've delivered quality programs, and the friendships that have been created.

**MICHAEL NORRIS  
SENIOR MANAGER**







# The Playground Project

Wollongong's first All Ages All Abilities Playground is closer to becoming a reality, with the first stage of the playground beginning construction in August.

The Disability Trust is proud to collaborate with the University of Wollongong (UOW) and Wollongong City Council to develop an inclusive play space for people with disability and the broader community to enjoy.

Imagined by UOW's Associate Professor Shoshana Dreyfus, the project was inspired by her son Bodhi's passion for playgrounds. In 2019, The Trust, the Uni and the Council embarked on a research journey. To understand play preferences, they worked with young people and adults with disability, including those with an intellectual disability.

The All Ages All Abilities Playground is jointly funded by the Australian Government, the NSW Government, Wollongong City Council, business supporters and many individuals in the community who dug deep to help out.

Multiplex, the IMB Community Foundation, Wests Illawarra, Aurizon Community Giving Fund and SCE made substantial financial contributions to the project.

The ongoing fundraising efforts and community grants have allowed various play options to be incorporated into the final playground design. The equipment variety is designed to meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities, making it a truly inclusive playground regardless of size, age, intellectual or physical ability.

The All Ages All Abilities playground will be built alongside existing play equipment in Stuart Park, and once completed, will include the following:

- Large-sized in-ground trampoline big enough for a wheelchair, adults and groups of children
- Multi-swing with different swing types to cater to different ages and needs
- Luna Carousel with an accessible platform to accommodate wheelchairs
- Paperbark Forest Maze that offers a sensory experience through natural elements
- Sensory garden for people to touch and smell a variety of textural plants
- Wollongong's very first human-sized mouse wheel
- Bespoke sensory play feature titled 'Sequen\_tial' donated by Dr Dreyfus
- Construction of new accessible parking for minibuses

**We look forward to the playground being enjoyed by all.**



**877**  
**Clients in our  
 Disability  
 Employment  
 Services**



**14,576**  
**Online training  
 courses  
 completed**



**99**  
**Home and  
 Living sites**



**237**  
**Placed in  
 employment**



**810**  
**Face to face  
 courses delivered**



**1820**  
**Employees**

**Profit**

**\$3,443,703**

**Net Assets**

**\$85,145,011**

**Total Revenue**

**\$146,612,582**



**4187**  
**Clients**

# Snapshot



## Bean Counters Ball

The Disability Trust had the opportunity to be the beneficiary of the inaugural Illawarra Bean Counters Ball, established by members of the local chapters of the Certified Practising Accountants Australia (CPA) and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ).

The Oscar-themed event was held at Wests Illawarra on Saturday, 25th February, with approximately \$13,000 raised thanks to the generosity of sponsors and guests. The fun-filled evening was full of standout moments with a performance by our very own Music Makers. The unique terrariums made by one of our participants, Luc, through his micro business in Bega, Living Art Sculptures, were purchased by event organisers to display as centrepieces and then auctioned off to guests on the night. The video presentation highlighting Luc's passion and creative flair for creating Living Art Sculptures and developing a business from his passion resonated with guests.

The vision for 2024's Bean Counters Ball is to promote scholarship opportunities for people with disability passionate about working within the Accounting and Finance sector.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH LUC'S STORY](#)



## Sports Ready Gala Day

BlueScope donates \$10,000 each year to our Sports Ready program, which goes towards a Gala Day held each year by The Disability Trust. The Gala Day invites school-age children with a disability to participate in a range of sports activities, with this year being its biggest day yet, with over 330 students attending.



## Lions Club

Chief Operating Officer Ed Birt was presented a \$13,300 donation on behalf of the Austinmer/Thirroul Lions Club at the Thirroul Seaside and Arts Festival in June. We would like to thank the local community for their ongoing support and fundraising efforts that contributed to the generous donation.

The Austinmer/Thirroul Lions Club has been a long-standing and valued supporter of The Disability Trust and the work we do to support children living with disability.



## Ray White Illawarra Golf Day

The annual Ray White Illawarra Golf Day, organised by Daniel Norris from Ray White Dapto and Horsley, was held at the Links Shell Cove. This 2022 event saw over 26 local businesses attend, raising over \$25,000, with teams enjoying 18 holes of golf followed by lunch inside the club. Funds from this event have gone to purchase new program equipment for our Sport and Recreation services.

## Hunter Grant for CycleAbility

The team at the Hunter received a \$2,000 grant from the Lake Macquarie Council Organisational Services Standing Committee to purchase a bike for their CycleAbility Program. Many community members and residents from Supported Independent Living services have enjoyed using the bike.

# Fundraising

## 50-50 Charity Raffle

The Disability Trust was chosen as the charity of choice for the NRL 50-50 charity raffle at the St George Illawarra Dragons and Canberra Raiders game. The 50-50 charity raffle supports local charities and organisations through their sporting partnerships and competitions. 50-50 divides the total fundraising pool between the charity of choice and one lucky winner. This year, \$6,000 was raised through the 50-50 raffle, with the winner generously donating their half back to The Disability Trust.

## Headway Program Trivia Night

The Day Options Illawarra team hosted an '80s-themed trivia night in November, raising \$5,300 for the Headway program. These funds will go back to the program, which assists participants with acquired brain injuries to be part of the community, build social connections and make woodwork items such as furniture, cheese boards and toys to donate to local charities.



## The Broomhead Family Foundation

In our ACT and Queanbeyan region, the team received a \$10,000 donation from the Broomhead Family Foundation to flourish their outdoor space at the adult respite facility. The new outdoor entertainment area is planned to be redone, planting a new garden bed with home-grown vegetables and herbs used in meals. The donation will allow for an additional vertical wall garden that brightens the area and an interactive sensory wall for those attending the respite facility. The donation will make the space a tranquil retreat, offering a quiet and safe outdoor space.

## Storage Facility

Illawarra Sport and Recreation services has been running CycleAbility from the Edney Lane carpark, storing their assistive cycles in a storage container.

In an exciting development, Wollongong City Council will be building a permanent storage facility for CycleAbility at The Unanderra Criterium Track. This will become a new base for the program in 2024.



## IDPwD

In 2022, the ACT and Queanbeyan region received \$2,000 from the Ricky Stuart Foundation and \$500 from George Reid for their International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) event. Canberra Region Rugby League also donated \$3,000 for the IDPwD celebrations and Score Raiders end of year presentation.

In the ACT and Queanbeyan, the team held three BBQs at Bunnings Warehouse raising over \$1,200 for their IDPwD event. The Sydney team have been awarded a \$2,000 grant from Camden Council to go towards a celebration for IDPwD. We look forward to celebrating IDPwD across our organisation.



# Fundraising





## Far South Coast

Our team was allocated \$15,725 from the 2022-23 Regional Youth Radio Program which enabled us to purchase podcasting equipment in three locations across our Far South Coast region, as well as editing software and a subscription to a publishing platform.

This project was warmly embraced by our team with a very successful podcast group now on offer for the people we support.

Bendigo Bank donated \$3,292 for the 'Light it up Blue' initiative for World Autism Day in April. This enabled the Bega Valley team to purchase blue solar lights for temporary installation at six locations.

The Mumbulla Community Foundation donated \$1,940 to deliver a series of 'Connecting Carers' morning teas across the Bega Valley.

Cooma Ex-Services Club donated a grant of \$3,000 to develop a Cooma Broncos tag footy program while Eurobodalla received a Clubs grant of \$600 for their Annual Ball that was held in early November.

On a larger scale, the Tourism Navigators Grant and annual Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) Program are funded by grants.

With the CPS program, across the 22/23 financial year, Bega Valley received \$475,000 to deliver the program to people living with psychosocial disability across south-eastern NSW and the team members are doing

some great work with wonderful testimonials from the people we've been supporting. The contract has been extended to enable the services to continue through to at least June, 2024. The Tourism Local Navigators Pilot helps connect employers with resources to remove the barriers to employ people with disability with local tourism operators benefitting from the industry-tailored approach.

## Southern Highlands

The Southern Highlands received a \$600 grant from Wingecarribee Shire Council which enabled the Club Trust Art and Craft program to purchase new paint, brushes, aprons and other supplies. The group recently displayed their artwork at the Bowral District Art Gallery and sold 39 out of 76 paintings with all proceeds going to the artists.

**The Disability Trust's Southern Highlands team would also like to thank the following businesses for their donations:**

- Big W Mittagong, for donating goods to be used as bingo prizes.
- Officeworks Mittagong, for their ongoing donations to The Disability Trust. These items are used by Club Trust and the School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES).
- Williams Quality Meats for donating sausages for our community event (International Day of People with Disability).
- St George Bank for donating items to be used as bingo prizes.

## Thanks to the KidzWish Foundation board



The Disability Trust acknowledges and thanks the members of the KidzWish Foundation board who have recently finished their tenures after many years of dedicated service.

Chairperson Neil Webster, vice-chairperson Natasha Nutt, treasurer Heather Kennedy, secretary Stacey Barlow and fellow board members Beti Krsteski,

David Borg and Anne Barlow have devoted countless hours to this worthy cause.

KidzWish Foundation was founded in 2004 with the vision to provide love and laughter to children who are sick, disadvantaged or with disability in the Illawarra. KidsWish are proud and committed to continuing their legacy.



# KIDSWISH FUNDRAISING

KidsWish, a charity organisation of The Disability Trust, continues to fulfil the lives of children living with disability or illness through supportive programs, special events and community projects with the goal to build an inclusive community for all to enjoy.

The 2023 KidsWish Golf Day was a massive success, with an extra 11 teams entering to compete in the fun-filled day. Local businesses joined to support KidsWish to play for first, second and third-placed prizes and take out the 2023 perpetual trophy. Funds raised through a mixture of hole challenges, silent auction prizes and raffle tickets were sold, raising more than \$23,000 from the day's festivities.

KidsWish received a \$10,000 grant from Wests Illawarra to support of KidsGroove, an engaging dance program encouraging children to have fun with movement and dance.

Another great event we have been lucky to participate in this year is the Illawarra Annual Brick Show, run by Gong Lug. The event took place over two days, showcasing Illawarra's talented LEGO® creators featuring two of our employees Shahna and David Larsen. This event raised more than \$30,000 for KidsWish.

Team KidsWish took part in this year's Great Illawarra Walk, where they trekked 40km from Shellharbour to Austinmer in extreme heat to raise funds for the Illawarra Academy of Sport athlete with a disability program. We are excited to announce KidsWish has been asked to be the charity partner for 2024. This will be one not to miss, and we hope you can all take part in this exciting event.

Support from local businesses and community members who donate and raise funds for KidsWish drives us to deliver outstanding programs and events.

Unanderra Hotel and Lakeview Hotel have partnered with KidsWish as part of their Public Communities Program. Members pledge points to a chosen charity, with these points converted to a cash donation from the hotels. This initiative delivered more than \$5,000 in donations for 2023.

**Fundraising opportunities come in all forms of support, whether it is from members of the community donating toys for our KidsWish Christmas party or raising funds through small local events such as Kembla Grange Christmas Lights.**

It also comes in the form of organisations choosing KidsWish as their beneficiary, such as the Lions Club and students at Wollongong TAFE donating the proceeds of their 'Getting Quizzzy with it' trivia night. No fundraising effort goes unrecognised, and we thank everyone from the bottom of our hearts for your ongoing support.





# GRAND OPENING

The Disability Trust celebrated a momentous occasion on Wednesday, May 17, hosting the grand opening of KidsWish House in Flinders.

KidsWish House is an exciting and much-needed facility for the Illawarra and South Coast communities, where people with disability and their families can access an extensive range of services. This purpose-built, multidisciplinary hub proudly serves as the new central location for KidsWish programs and events. Additionally, it offers essential clinical services such as speech and occupational therapy. With its versatile features, including a basketball court doubling as a hall, a music and dance studio, an outdoor courtyard, a sensory garden and office spaces, KidsWish House is the ultimate community space.

The project was funded by various entities, including the Australian Government through the \$1.38 billion Building Better Regions program, the NSW State Government, The Disability Trust, KidzWish Foundation and generous donations from the local community.

To start the official opening, Uncle Dale performed a smoking ceremony, followed by Uncle Richard

offering a warm Welcome to Country. The event featured engaging presentations from Carol Berry, CEO of The Disability Trust; Neil Webster, Chair of KidzWish Foundation Board; The Honourable Stephen Jones MP; and KidsWish parent, Sally Grant and her son, Dane, who expressed his appreciation of the impressive facility.

KidsWish House is a nurturing haven, offering programs that encourage engagement in enjoyable activities, fostering friendships, and cultivating strengths while acquiring new skills. The space is shared with Noah's Inclusion Services, an organisation dedicated to providing therapy, education and support for children and their families. The Disability Trust's Trusted Clinical Services contributes a range of clinical support services out of the facility. With these combined efforts, KidsWish House proudly stands as an inclusive and comprehensive disability support hub for Illawarra and South Coast communities.





## A Year of Milestones and Community Support for **KiDSWiSH**

2023 has been an incredible year for KidsWish - highlights include the official opening of KidsWish House, the introduction of KidsWish Charity Match fundraising events through new partnerships with the Wollongong Wolves, Illawarra Hawks and Wollongong Roller Hawks, and the addition of new school holiday events.

The community support for KidsWish and the engagement of children and families in our free programs and events continues to grow, helping to achieve our mission of fulfilling the lives of children living with disability or illness.

KidsWish was excited and proud to launch its first KidsWish Charity Match fundraising events in 2023. With sport providing an incredible platform to unite communities and the Illawarra laying claim to some incredible sporting teams, we couldn't think of a better way to grow community support for KidsWish. The Wolves, Hawks and Roller Hawks were committed to partnering with us to provide the community and their fans with special events that raise money for KidsWish. The Wollongong Wolves KidsWish Charity Match, held at WIN Stadium in July, welcomed record crowds to Round 25 of their National Premier League match against Sydney FC and raised close to \$6,000 for KidsWish. The inaugural Hawks vs Roller Hawks KidsWish

Charity Match treated fans to a wheelchair basketball exhibition contest featuring players from the Hawks' NBL side against the Roller Hawks athletes. This event in August at The Snakepit in Wollongong raised more than \$5,000.

We look forward to growing these events in 2024 and beyond.

KidsWish events are a highlight for the children and families we support, with 2023 seeing some new additions to our event calendar. School holidays can prove to be challenging to keep kids entertained, along with therapy schedules often interrupted. From reptile encounters to fairy face painting, Holiday Hoops with the Illawarra Hawks and Wollongong Roller Hawks, LEGO® Fun at KidsWish House and our very first KidsWish House Silent Disco, we have loved bringing special events and experiences to the community.

As we reflect on the year that has been, it fills us with excitement about the year ahead and how we can continue to fulfil the lives of children living with disability or illness and their families.

- 6 KidsWish programs
- Over 200 program sessions delivered
- 45 children benefit from KidsWish Programs
- More than 1000 children from 528 families attended KidsWish events
- 7 school holiday events
- 3 large-scale events for 250 guests
- KidsWish Christmas Party for 2000 guests

**KiDSWiSH**

**KiDSWiSH**  
Bringing Lives Together

**KiDSWiSH**  
Bringing Lives Together







# #TEAM AWESOME

Written by  
**Amber** and  
**David**

Hashtag Team Awesome (#TA) is a small group of friends who support each other and their creative hobbies.

The group was formed in 2017 but was shy and quiet to begin with, eventually warming up and rekindling past friendships from school years prior. When the group isn't playing Cards Against Humanity or chatting about their shared interests, they are planning and completing projects.

One such project was the mural in the Room of Requirement, which took the two members at the time, David and Amber, 19 months to create and finish with the added challenge of the COVID pandemic in 2021.

As for future #TA projects, there are plans for a joint podcast and hopes to attend a cosplay convention as a group.

# Tourism Local Navigators Pilot

The Disability Trust was awarded a grant from the Department of Social Services (DSS) in July. In partnership with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), we will deliver the Tourism Local Navigators Pilot by the end of June, 2024.



The focus of the Pilot is on the tourism industry and visitor economy. Covering the regions from Illawarra to Eden, we will help employers connect with resources to develop a deeper understanding of how to remove barriers to successfully employ people with disability.

The Pilot aims to lift employer engagement, capability and demand by giving employers the tools to confidently hire, support, develop and retain more people with disability in the visitor economy.

The outcomes of the Pilot will include building small and medium-sized (SME) tourism-based businesses' capabilities in disability confidence and workplace accessibility through industry-tailored approaches and resources. It will also involve reforming workplace culture, employment practices, sustainable job creation for people with disability and targeted on-the-job training and support.

Since starting the Pilot, the Tourism Navigators have completed training sessions delivered by AFDO, addressing business inclusion and diversity services, preparing to work with businesses and providing disability awareness training.

Many community organisations have shown great enthusiasm for the Pilot, including Destination Wollongong, Destination Southern, various Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) including TAFE, Shoalhaven Food Network, Local Jobs Program, Centre of Excellence, various Chambers of Commerce, various Service Groups and Local Aboriginal Lands Councils.

The Navigators will work alongside Disability Employment Services (DES), School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES), Supported Employment, NDIS and high schools to reach people with all abilities and support them in the transition into employment.

The Pilot aims to enable more people with disability to secure suitable, sustainable jobs in the tourism industry. Increasing employment opportunities, creating safe and inclusive workplaces will benefit people with disability who are currently:

- Unemployed,
- Underemployed,
- With partial capacity or temporary incapacity,
- Those receiving income support, and
- Those not receiving government assistance.



# The Trust remains Employer of Choice in the disability services sector!

For the fourth year running, The Disability Trust has been successful in Australia's HR Awards!



## PEOPLE LEARNING CULTURE

For the fourth year running, The Disability Trust has been successful in Australia's HR Awards. In FY23 The Trust was named Excellence Awardees (finalists) in the Employer of Choice and HR Team of the Year category. This follows past success in the Employer of Choice category: 2021 – Finalist, 2020 – Winner, 2019 – Winner.


**443**  
**Workforce**  
**members**  
**onboarded**

**14,500+**  
**Hours of online**  
**training**

**810**  
**Face to face**  
**courses delivered**

Aligning to our strategic priority of ensuring a competent and skilled workforce, in FY23 The Disability Trust proudly onboarded 443 new members of our workforce and delivered more than 800 in-person (face to face) courses to our staff. We also provided our workers more than 14,500 hours of online training.

We are proud to have had seven members of our workforce supported to complete formal traineeships and one of our staff members, Linzi De Souza, was named a Finalist for Trainee of the Year in the NSW Training Awards. The Trust demonstrated success with our internal career development opportunities – with 19 internal promotions and 27 internal role transfers/changes (supporting job enrichment and career enhancement).



In keeping with the theme of a skilled and competent workforce, we are proud of the continued growth and success against our Reconciliation Action Plan, and our broader culture of belonging and our cultural safety, as we continue to mature and evolve towards the goal of Employer of Choice for people with disability. More broadly, we have also achieved noteworthy success in WHS, with evident shifts in workforce and leadership awareness, commitment and outcomes in work health and safety and recognising our priority to keep our staff, clients and community wellbeing, health and safety front of mind.

Finally, what an honour it is to have received 266 nominations in our peer-to-peer recognition program named Trust Champions – recognising when members of the workforce achieve success over and above the norm, aligned to our organisational values. Annually

our workforce vote on the 'Trust Champion of the Year' and in FY23 we awarded this accolade to four well deserving winners across the business:

- **Jessica Micallef – Team Leader**
- **Asalemo Taiao – Behaviour Support Practitioner**
- **Tiffany Heath – Team Leader**
- **Matthew Cameron – Senior Employment Consultant**

As we head into the latter part of 2023, our workforce continues to be recognised as invaluable. It is our workers, at all levels, and in all roles across our vast organisational footprint, who contribute to the success of The Disability Trust. Without our terrific workforce, we would not be able to provide excellent services to our amazing participants; and it is this mutually beneficial and rewarding relationship that continues to make The Disability Trust a truly great place to work!



# Quality and Safeguarding



**M**edication use, specifically polypharmacy, is a significant issue for people with a disability. There are many factors to consider when taking medications, and taking multiple medications increases risks. Research shows polypharmacy use is significantly higher for people with disability.

The Disability Trust, through our Quality Framework, is committed to understanding and meeting the needs of the people who choose our service.

A Practice Focus Group dedicated to improved approaches in medication use is working to support participants, families and staff to review medication use and consider non-medication strategies to support healthy lifestyles.

#### This includes:

- **Developing accessible resources to support people and their support teams to participate in decisions around medications and assist them in having discussions with their medical practitioners.**
- **Ensure participants have the opportunity for polypharmacy reviews with pharmacists and GPs.**
- **Developing training for staff around better approaches to medication management.**

## CORI TAKES CHARGE OF HIS MEDICATION

Cori, a 20-year-old man from Cooma, who is an avid small motor enthusiast with a knack for fixing broken lawnmowers and whipper snippers, has recently benefited from a focus on his medications. Cori had struggled with overwhelming fear and anxiety around attending medical appointments.

Before his recent medication review, behaviour support services worked closely with Cori and his family regarding his medications and possible alternatives. Using easy-to-read information from the Specialist Intellectual Disability Health team, Cori discussed what his medications were prescribed for, how they made him feel and how they may be introduced or reduced over time. With this preparation, Cori and his family could ask questions and discuss what they wanted to ask the medical team during the appointment.

Cori was a strong advocate for his own experience. He described in detail what it feels like when he

becomes dysregulated. He talked about how he “can’t stop” even when he knows it’s the wrong thing to do and how this makes him “feel bad later”. He also animatedly described what happened when he was accidentally given a medication he is allergic to whilst he was in hospital – saying “it made me go crazy!”.

After the appointment, his mother Nicole was relieved. “I felt like I could speak better for Cori because I knew more about the medications and what the doctors were talking about.”

As a result of self-advocacy, changes will be implemented to Cori’s medication regime, including a replacement for a more effective medication. Cori and his family clarified how and when these changes would be made.

The entire experience proved how skill building and fostering capacity can support people to advocate effectively for themselves with an outcome of improved quality of life and understanding of their experience. For The Disability Trust, this is an example of our Quality focus in action.



**Polypharmacy** is when people are using five or more medicines at the same time, or two or more psychotropic medications at the same time.

## Practice Focus Groups

"It's our commitment to quality that sets us apart; the focus on people's experience is vital if we want to do our best," said Trust Deputy Chair Carol Heijo.

This commitment drives the Practice Focus Groups across service delivery areas in The Disability Trust. Led by our competent and driven Senior Managers, the groups aim to support innovation and creativity in service design and improvement.

Each group reviews approaches and explores how to implement best practices into our everyday services. Staff from all levels contribute to projects, discussions and practice improvement approaches for how we can do things better.

Groups cover topics such as Polypharmacy, Restrictive Practices and Supported Decision Making, or specific service areas, such as Home and Living, Employment, Day Options, Short Term Accommodation and Community Programs.

We look forward to sharing more outcomes from our Practice Focus Groups with you.



## Family Advisory Group

The Family Advisory Group was launched in early 2022 and remains resolute in supporting The Disability Trust to maintain its central goal of transparency and clear communication to all its stakeholders. The members of the Family Advisory Group have contributed to perspectives on policies and procedures, including accessible language documents, cultural awareness and safety, and other initiatives such as the GOOD Plan, a person-centred planning approach.

Advisory Group member Jacqui McGovern says the group is an important conduit and practical support between families and the management of The Disability Trust.

If you would like more information about the Family Advisory Group or would like to join, please email [communications@disabilitytrust.org.au](mailto:communications@disabilitytrust.org.au).

## Audits

The Disability Trust received excellent feedback in two external audits during September.

The National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) and ISO9001:2015 (QMS) conducted across various regions of The Disability Trust, involving many of our teams and services, resulted in no nonconformities and highly positive feedback from our external auditors at DNV.

The Quality team worked closely with all teams involved. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase the fantastic support and services we offer people to help them achieve their goals.







The privilege is  
all ours at  
Team TPM!

# Trusted Plan Management

The Disability Trust's Trusted Plan Management (TPM) service is bespoke; we are more than a transactional function. We follow the NDIS PM guidelines for Plan Management and go the extra mile to 'allocate funds for providers' per their service agreements, paying providers for the services they have consented to with the client.

This past year, we have witnessed participants transition back to face-to-face supports and capacity building activities after years through the COVID pandemic and the use of virtual services such as telehealth.

The team consists of five dedicated and skilled staff who aim to build relationships with the participants and their nominees so we can better support their choice and control. TPM has excellent energy and a healthy team culture, supporting each other and going above and beyond for our participants with an empathetic approach.

The team have all completed NDIS 101 training and keep up to date with the ever-changing landscape of the NDIS by living and breathing the NDIS Pricing

Arrangements and Price Limits, constantly tracking changes and updates as they unfold.

Referrals to TPM mostly come from word-of-mouth recommendations from a friend or a satisfied service provider of supports. We provide Plan Management support to approximately 433 NDIS participants spanning the east coast of NSW and ACT.

**One participant we support is a 5-year-old born with Congenital Myotonic Muscular Dystrophy, characterised by progressive muscle wasting and weakness. Her mum tells us she adores Emma Wiggle, Elsa and swimming, like many other young girls.**

She has reached some significant milestones this year, including using equipment purchased from NDIS funding to help her build capacity and engagement in the community.

Her bright personality captured us all, and seeing what the NDIS has done for so many drives us to want to give more and always do the best for the people that we support.

# Trusted Support Coordination

Throughout 2023, Trusted Support Coordination (TSC) has focused on developing our team to work towards continued improvement, ensuring a strong focus on quality service provision and support.

Our team of experienced and energetic Support Coordinators help more than 1200 participants across our broad geographic footprint. We ensure each individual is working towards their NDIS goals and they are supported to exercise choice and control across all aspects of their daily life. Our Specialist Support Coordinators assist them in navigating the complexities that create barriers within their plan implementation process.



**We spoke to Sophie, a mother of two children. Sophie's youngest child, Phoenix, has autism and an intellectual disability and receives Specialist Support Coordination services through Trusted Support Coordination.**

## What is your experience of working with TSC?

Working with Jen from TSC is like having an angel in your back pocket. You can focus on your own child instead of sitting on waiting lists and trying to find services for your child. The feeling of having a good team around you and working together as a unit is a fantastic feeling. Special needs children need cooperation between services, and Jen has helped to make this happen.

Specialist Support Coordination takes a load off your shoulders, not to mention they have experience and importantly, know people who have experience. They can make recommendations that work best for your child so that, as a parent you are not starting from scratch in trying to find the right support.

When the review times come up, we know three months in advance so I can be prepared for it, and it reduces the anxiety around the process. You know what to expect from the review now we have Jen. When we only had a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), we would find out the month before, and everything was rushed and done at the last moment.

We get good advice and a listening ear when you have issues. Being a parent with disability is overwhelming. With Jen, I have someone to help listen to the impact of parenting my children and

help with the experience of mother guilt in trying to balance work, disability and parenting.

Juggling is my forte! TSC has helped me put one of my balls on the shelf to focus on Phoenix and not just the services around her. I can now play, engage and help her to regulate herself rather than hassling for service providers. I can have fun with my child now.

## What has been the impact of working with TSC?

It has significantly impacted my life, I stress a lot less with Jen having my back, fighting for what Phoenix needs with the NDIS and other services. I feel like Jen is listening because she fights for the right things for my child.

As a parent, you feel like you are constantly not heard, like you are sinking all the time and the constant feeling of failing is horrible. Having Jen there is reassuring, that she is listening and fighting for me. She knows how to help and is effective in supporting my family.

Phoenix now has a communication pad that everyone uses, and my daughter is engaging with it incredibly. We also have regular respite, which is helping significantly, especially recently when our family's needs have changed. Respite allows me to work and continue to earn an income despite changes at home.

The support has been exactly what I need for our family. With Jen, I have a back-up as she provides reassurance. We do need reassurance sometimes when things go belly-up. Jen is accommodating in finding solutions to work around the family's needs. She is accountable and sends minutes from meetings, etc, so I know where everything is up to.





# CAMERON AND LEMO



Cameron is a singer/songwriter from North Canberra who has been working with Behaviour Support Practitioner Lemo since 2021. When Cameron first met Lemo, they talked about working on his engagement with school. He has since completed Year 10 and won the Excellence Award for creativity, a prestigious recognition in ACT education.

Since finishing school, Cameron has taken his singer-songwriting skills up several levels, gaining the attention of the likes of Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group. Lemo and Cameron have also worked together on a journey of self-development, and Cameron agreed to answer a few questions about his experience working with a Behaviour Support Practitioner.



## Staff training for safe and enjoyable mealtimes

Not only do our Trusted Clinical Speech Pathologists provide excellent therapeutic services to people with disability, but they also contribute to the knowledge and skills of our high-calibre staff at The Disability Trust. Mealtime Management is a compulsory internal training opportunity, thoughtfully and strategically designed to be engaging, evidence-based and exceed industry standards.

The course offers a 'hands-on' approach to practising food and drink consistency modifications, with the facilitator providing oversight and feedback to ensure these critical skills are well understood. As well as safety, the course also encourages the participants to consider the rights of everyone to have enjoyable mealtimes and what this may mean for each person we support.



**What sort of things do you do with Lemo?**

We drive around for half an hour and chill. I like being in motion, and then we go to our special spot (a reserve at the back of suburban Canberra) and stop. We do meditation for anything from 10-20 minutes. After we do our meditation, we usually chat and then we go home, and either Lemo comes in and talks to Mum or heads off.

**What is the most memorable thing you have done with Lemo?**

After meditating at our special spot, we noticed kangaroos in the distance doing what most animals do to produce offspring (re-worded by Lemo).

**What has changed for you since meeting Lemo?**

My personality, who I am, the choices I make, the way I perceive things, the way I do things, thinking things through before I do them.

**What are your thoughts on meditation?**

It's very helpful. It helps a lot, like it helps me calm down, helps like your heart stop racing a million miles an hour, and helps me think more clearly and be in a space where I can think straight.



**What advice would you give other therapists working with young people?**

I reckon just be more like Lemo. Try being more understanding of your client, don't treat them as a client. Treat them as, you know, a mate. Don't just do it for a job just to get paid, get to know them in a way so you can help them. If you don't get close to them, you don't understand their needs or understand anything about them and show them respect, the same respect you would normally expect back, and it should go easy.

**Where will you be in five years?**

Honest to God, either two places, I'll either be in a private jet flying to Miami, or I'll be on the streets.



We know some people we support have specific needs for safe and enjoyable eating and drinking. Our Trusted Clinical Speech Pathologists assist staff to be confident and empowered to meet these needs.





# Travel you can trust

From the chaos of Manila to the serene isolation of Tasmania, the thrills of Disneyland to the majestic beauty of Uluru, it sure has been an amazing year at Trusted Travel!

## 2023 Snapshot

- Group holidays – 40+
- Travellers supported – 100+
- 7880 km north to Tokyo, Japan
- 989 km south to Battery Point, Tasmania
- 12,128 km east to Los Angeles, California
- 3284 km west to Rottneest Island, Western Australia
- Highest altitude – 2038m, Thredbo, New South Wales
- Coldest temperature – -1, Jindabyne, New South Wales
- Highest elevation – Approximately 38,000 feet (many, many times)

## Meet Craig



Craig last left the country when he went to California as an exchange student in 1994 when he was 16.

In 1997, Craig was in an accident that left him with an acquired brain injury. It was a long road to rehabilitation and he is now supported by The Disability Trust in his home in Campbelltown.

“What did I think when I first heard about Trusted Travel? I guess I thought it sounded cool. Not for me though. I’m a bit of a homebody and over the years, I have developed very specific hobbies and interests. I thought probably these holidays would be a bit generic. Not for me.”

Craig’s view of Trusted Travel changed when his Support Worker told him Trusted Travel was heading to Japan. “Straight away, I knew I needed to go.”

The lead-up to Craig’s trip would not be without its challenges. “I was anxious, dude. I must have talked myself into and out of it a hundred times, and it felt like maybe there were people who didn’t think I could do it.

“When I met up with everyone at the airport, I knew it was going to be alright. The Trusted Travel crew put out this confident energy. I was all-in at that point, so I just rode that wave with them and the next minute Sydney was behind me.

“Going to Japan was my absolute lifelong dream. I’m a gamer. A massive gamer. It’s a big part of who I am.

“The Trusted Travel guides were flexible enough that I was able to visit some places that were important to me.”

When everyone else was visiting temples in Kyoto, Craig could hop in a taxi to see another icon of the ancient capital – Nintendo world headquarters!

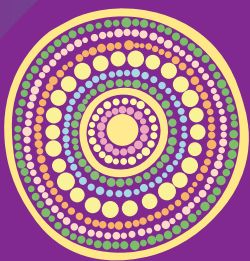
“I think the security guard thought it was funny. It’s not really a tourist thing. But she was cool. She let us snap as many photos as we wanted in the car park.”

**It was a pilgrimage 30 years in the making.**

# Craig's Story



# Advancing Reconciliation



The launch of The Disability Trust's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

saw several meaningful actions delivered across the organisation's footprint based around the RAP's core pillars of

strong relationships, cultivating respect and creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples within our scope of influence.

## Relationships

The Disability Trust hosted the Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group (IACBWG) monthly meeting on August 2 at KidsWish House. The meeting was an opportunity to learn more about the services and support available for First Nations communities across the Illawarra.

It was inspiring to hear from various organisations and learn about their initiatives in the community. It was also an opportunity to collaborate with organisations to cultivate meaningful relationships within the community.

## Respect

May 26 was National Sorry Day. Alice Patten, a Gunai, Yorta Yorta and Wurundjeri woman from Victoria and Family Advisory Group member, shared her story. She explained why National Sorry Day is so important as it is part of Truth Telling that paves the way to healing. She encouraged all of us to reflect and work

on our unconscious biases so we can all be part of building a culturally safe and inclusive community.

A NAIDOC video was produced and circulated across our organisation featuring First Nations staff members Chloe Lenihan and Blake Ford yarning with our CEO Carol Berry about NAIDOC's theme "For Our Elders". They each shared their knowledge and experience on how to care and show respect For Our Elders.

The Disability Trust actively supports our First Nations staff and participants to reconnect with culture. Tony Hammond, an Indigenous man and participant with The Disability Trust, has started attending a Men's Group organised by Gawura Aboriginal Corporation, a not-for-profit organisation run by Gawura Aboriginal Community dedicated to addressing Indigenous social, cultural and economic concerns in the Illawarra.

For Earth Day in April, "A Garden for Life" conducted a Bush Tucker Workshop. It was an enriching experience that offered an opportunity to learn about the traditional bush plant foods First Nations Australian communities used for thousands of years. During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to taste these ingredients, deepening their appreciation for the diverse and sustainable food sources that Australia's First Peoples have continuously relied on. The workshop provided practical knowledge and promoted understanding and respect for culture.



## ● Illawarra



# BEST COFFEE IN WOLLONGONG



This year we changed our coffee brand to a local company, Seven Miles, and updated our coffee machine to enable us to develop the skills of all staff in making quality coffees.

We employ knowledgeable and experienced staff to train our supported employees to learn valuable skills to work in a café. Recently, we employed a new Café Coordinator, Lorenzo, a well-known local chef. These changes instigated an updated menu and an emphasis on quality food that the employees are proud to prepare.

Over the past 12 months, we have worked hard with all employees to step outside their comfort zone and learn various skills in the café. Dane and Isabella, have worked hard to develop their skills on the grill and prepare meals. Brett and Clare have developed their barista skills on the coffee machine, and the team have

welcomed new members Rachel, Sean, Jonathan and Oliver, who have a fantastic presence in the customer service space. We've seen other team members, including Amy, Tim, Emily, Ethan, Rodney and Yusuf, continue to strengthen their skills and knowledge.

In mid-2023, we were approached by aged care provider HammondCare to look at establishing a new Plant Room café at their Horsley site. We launched our new site in September and the event even featured on *A Current Affair*. This site has enabled us to create exciting opportunities for existing and new employees. The values of HammondCare and The Disability Trust are strongly aligned, and this partnership will ensure we can continue to develop the skills of all our employees in a supportive setting.

Drop by either of our sites at Edney Lane or Horsley and say hi to our team and let us make you one of the best coffees in Wollongong!



## Individualised Supports

Our small team has supported 103 clients by facilitating 54,500 hours of client-centred support and care.

Our highlights include supporting a client to ride in the UCI All Abilities Ride and the MS Gong Community Ride. He has now gone on to join CycleAbility, riding once a week with the program's coordinator, Brad.

We have assisted one of our First Nations clients in reconnecting to Country. He has attended Reconciliation at UOW, NAIDOC week at Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service and is now attending Gawura Men's Group.

We assisted a client in meeting his goal of watching the V8 Supercars race at Eastern Creek and another to visit the Royal Easter Show.

## Day Options

Day Options Illawarra has had a great year, participating in some exciting events, including Jersey Day to raise awareness for organ donation and National Pyjama Day to raise funds to support children in foster care. We attended community events to support NAIDOC Week and multiple NDIS rallies to support workers in the disability sector and raise awareness around the need for NDIS funding.

## Headway Cooking Program

The cooking program at Headway actively supports participants in building on their life skills associated with cooking, budgeting, menu planning, hygiene, knife safety, stove safety, measuring and mixing. The student cooks collaborate throughout the process, beginning with menu ideas, creating a shopping list, delegating duties, setting the table and cleaning dishes. When challenges arise, they problem-solve as a group. When the meal is prepared, the group enjoy eating their creation together, enhancing their social skills and building strong friendships.



## HEADWAY WOODWORK GROUP

Woodwork at Headway is a hands-on program focusing on carpentry and woodworking skills needed to make big and small projects like toy cars, cheese and wine boards, wooden shields, wind chimes and

storage boxes. Our experienced instructor mentors and supervises students to learn how to use tools and explore their creativity.





# SPORT & REC HIGHLIGHTS



During the past year, Sport and Recreation services have been bustling across our programs, challenging participants with lots of fun and engaging activities.

**There have been so many fantastic highlights, including:**

- Milson Island, Berry and Helensburgh camps, where individuals participated in many exciting activities, including laser tag, archery, flying fox and kayaking while enjoying an excellent opportunity to connect with their friends.



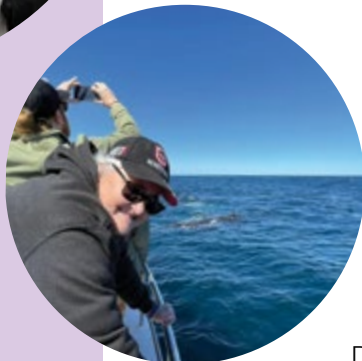
- Sunday Funday and Finally It's Friday attended outings including whale watching, Disney's Beauty and the Beast: The Musical, Jurassic World, Royal Easter Show, Sydney Zoo and Shrek the Musical, to name just a few.
- Score Dragons played the Score Raiders at WIN Stadium, Kogarah and Canberra before three NRL games. White Knights FC played against their sister program in Nowra.
- The Art and Craft program created fantastic works of art. Altogether Drama and the Mischief Makers theatre programs performed at Wollongong Town Hall.
- The Strangeways Ensemble performed 'Something That Happened' at Merrigong Theatre Company.
- Music Makers 13th Creative Performance evening at the Pavilion Kiama.
- Annual Sport and Recreation Awards Night at the Novotel Northbeach.

It's been great to see so many participants achieve their goals and make new friends. We want to thank our incredible Sport and Recreation team for making the past 12 months memorable.





Some highlights from our team in 2023



## Residential Illawarra and Shoalhaven

- This year we purchased two new properties in Calderwood and rented two more in Horsley. This has allowed some residents to move into housing better suited to their needs and allowed us to open new homes to meet the needs of our increasing waitlist. We now have 28 Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes and three Short Term Accommodation respite centres.
- Our Disability Support Workers, Team Leaders and Managers are completing Keyworker Training and all Accommodation Managers and some Team Leaders are completing a Diploma of Leadership and Management.
- Residents from our Helena SIL went on a holiday together and enjoyed visiting Cockington Green and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.
- Jesse from Gateway Transitional Living secured employment, working with animals.
- Corey from Gateway Transitional Living played for the Score Dragons team.
- Residents from our Hollow Way SIL attended the All Abilities Ride at the Ride Wollongong Festival of Cycling.
- Conway Residents enjoyed a whale watching cruise in Jervis Bay and were lucky enough to see several whales.
- Peter from Tartarian showed his love for animals at every opportunity, including a trip to Symbio with his housemates.
- Kayla visited the CycleAbility Program while enjoying some time in respite.
- Parkside respite continues to be the party house, enjoying making decorations and cheering on the Matildas and outdoor movie nights.
  - Matt from Stewards had some artwork he completed at Greenacres chosen for the new Stuart Park playground water station.

We are approaching our goal of opening the new children's respite centre in Dapto soon. We have consulted with Uncle Richard around naming our centre and have chosen 'Nanga Mai', this means Dream in Dharawal language.

Indigenous artist Garry Purchase designed a custom mural to represent Nanga Mai for our centre. We love the meaning and vibrant colours. In April, we held an Easter Raffle and raised \$433 to help fund sensory equipment for the opening. We aim to have participants from 5-18 years old enjoying respite in 2024.





# TRUSTED GARDEN PROGRAM

The Trusted Garden Program has grown and is now operating four days a week across two sites - Foothills Balgownie and Edney Lane. Our gardeners participate in various activities, including growing veggies, building planter boxes, and garden arts and crafts – their hard work is on display at both sites.

At the Trusted Garden Program, we are great at upcycling and our creative participants can turn just about anything into a planter or a piece of garden art. One of the program's aims is to learn about sustainability and how to be kinder to our environment. This is achieved through learning about organic gardening, rescuing and reusing waste materials, and creating habitat gardens.

Another aim is to create gardens everyone can enjoy. Seeing people visit and enjoy the garden generates a great deal of happiness and pride for all our gardeners and is one of our best achievements.

This year we built garden sheds out of recycled wooden pallets, restored metal garden furniture, made splat caps that can be purchased at The Plant Room café and as always, a bumper crop of herbs and veggies can be found to share with visitors to our garden. We have a model train enthusiast who is working on a display for the residents at an Illawarra SIL site and the participants at Foothills.

Next year we will continue to expand and create a fun garden for all to enjoy, learn how to grow even more veggies sustainably and to extend our bush tucker garden.

The Trusted Garden Program is something people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can participate in. There are many benefits to working in the garden, such as physical exercise, being in nature, socialising, making new friends and getting to eat all the healthy food we grow.

## David's Success Story with Workskills

We are proud of David for achieving his employment goals! David connected with Workskills to increase his confidence and was eager to find employment where he could keep up his good fitness level. At 56, he was ready to do something he was passionate about.

David's reliability is admirable. He never missed an appointment, was never late and actively participated in his consultations. Once he told us he wanted to "do outdoor work", such as lawnmowing or maintenance, our consultants pointed David in the right direction. David's Workskills Consultant found businesses for him to contact to ask if they had any positions available. It did not take long to secure an interview!

Workskills coached David during his interview process, helping to ease his nerves and grow his confidence. David met his future employer, Will Sale, from SCPC Lawncare. Will said their primary need was reliability, an area in which David excelled.

After a successful trial, David officially started employment. His determination paid off. Workskills continues to provide post-employment support to David and his employer. David's employment consultant, Simone, was proud of his journey:

**"Once in a while, you get that really special client whose journey you are privileged to be a part of and one you will never forget. David is one of those clients for me".**

"We are proud of David's achievements in such a short time. Within six months of mentoring, coaching, and support from his employers and employment consultants, David obtained his First Aid Certificate and driver's licence and is now a supervisor! David's demeanour has positively changed. He is more excited and says with exhilaration 'I have a purpose now'."







## Mitchell's Journey with SLES

Mitchell's journey began in 2020 when he joined our Wollongong School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) group. In 2021, Mitchell took the opportunity to be one of our first participants to move to the new SLES centre in Shellharbour. Change doesn't come easy for Mitchell, but with self-reflection and goal setting, he took stock of his skills and talents, identified areas for improvement, and set his sights on finding a career path. Mitchell sought guidance from others to bolster his knowledge and confidence.

Then came the arduous job hunt and countless resumes were sent out. Rejections were a part of the process and each one stung but he learned valuable lessons, honed his interview skills and became more resilient. After months of study, he gained his learner's licence, took part in an 11-week Certificate III in Hospitality and had several work placement opportunities.

Mitchell gained enough confidence to approach the team at the newly finished KidsWish House and ask if he could volunteer two afternoons a week, which he is still doing and loving. Knowing working with children was something he enjoyed, Mitchell had the opportunity to undertake a school term work placement with the wonderful Sport and Recreation Sports Ready Program. Mitchell asked to continue for Term 2.

Finally, the day arrived when Mitchell received that long-awaited job offer. The joy and sense of accomplishment was immeasurable. He had stepped out of his comfort zone, faced his fears and achieved what once seemed impossible. He is now an employee of the Sports Ready team.

This story is not just about finding a job; it's about the power of stepping outside of what's comfortable. It's about the journey of self-discovery, personal growth and the realisation we are capable of much more than we often give ourselves credit for.

# Purchase of Edney Lane

The Disability Trust was founded in the Illawarra in 1974 and has grown to become one of the leading disability providers in Australia, while maintaining strong links to the local community.

Our head office is located at Edney Lane, just south of the Wollongong CBD, and the property was recently listed for sale. We are excited to announce The Disability Trust has purchased the property which secures this location for the longer term and provides a financial benefit compared to renting. We will have increased scope to tailor the site to the needs of our staff and clients so we can continue to provide high-quality training and services.



## ● Shoalhaven

### Waratah Day Options

Waratah Day Options have had a rollercoaster of a ride over the past 12 months. We packed up our old centre in October 2022 as the building was sold. It was the end of an era as we were sad to walk out on the last day.

While waiting for renovations to finish at the new site, we hired space through the local Uniting Church at the Wesley Centre. It was an anxious time for everyone as we went from a place with lots of room to one space.

We had some great times at the Wesley Centre that included cooking some yummy treats in the kitchen, having karaoke sessions and movie days. We loved getting ready for Christmas and setting up a new tree.

We are excited to open the doors to our new facility in Nowra. This is home to Day Options, After School Care and other unique programs starting in the new year.

The facility has a big hub area out the back, plus space inside the house to run programs and give everyone their own space, and so far, and it has been excellent. We are designing artwork for the walls and putting our stamp on the place. We are busy with theme days that include Funky Shirt Friday and Oktoberfest.

We are constantly getting out and about to enjoy everything from the beach to picnic spots. Our door is always open and we make great morning tea to share. Come and visit us anytime.

### Cedar Place Day Options

We have had a year full of participating in community programs such as the NSW State Emergency Service and Australian Men's Shed Association, assisting at the local library, tennis club and IRT. Exploring the local area in the Shoalhaven has been a standout this year.

Those at Cedar Place have thoroughly engaged in these activities and the feedback from staff, participants and their families has been phenomenal.

Over the past year, Shoalhaven programs have had a busy and exciting year with growth in all areas.



### Andrew's Employment Milestone

Workskills participant Andrew Ramsay is celebrating his first anniversary as a cleaner at Fair Repairs. Andrew has made a great impression and is delighted to have a steady job he enjoys. We congratulate Andrew on achieving his milestone and navigating through many challenges.

The swimming program has always been a big part of Cedar Place. With many years of attending our local leisure centre, everyone has formed a great relationship with other community members.

We are looking forward to spending the summer around our local beaches.





## **Ulladulla Bowling**

The Ulladulla bowling team keeps improving, with their weekly competitions. The friendships and eagerness to beat each other's scores make for a fun-filled night of laughs. A few members were selected for the Regional Special Olympics in October at Ulladulla.

## **Thursday night with friends**

Every Thursday night, a group of friends go out for dinner, occasionally going tenpin bowling as well. They all have a say on where they would like to eat, ensuring everyone can have their favourite meal. The group love getting out into the community and having a great night.

## **White Knights Soccer Team**

Our White Knights received their new uniforms, purchased with the help of the Shoalhaven Ex Servicemen's Club and Real Aussie Sheds in Nowra.

The team played a couple of games against the Illawarra White Knights, having fun and building their friendships on and off the field.

## **Fit N Fun Ulladulla and Vincentia**

Ulladulla and Vincentia Leisure Centre teams have continued to put in 100% each week, doing their gym workout and swimming in the heated pools.

# SHOALHAVEN SLES

Our Shoalhaven School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) group have worked exceptionally well in building their education and knowledge of what to expect when they start work. Everyone in SLES has begun work placement or is about to start.

Most of our group have begun or completed courses across various industries and learning areas. One of our participants has recently started his Certificate II in Animal Studies at TAFE, undergoing work experience with Fins, Fangs and Feathers twice a week. This is specific to his goals, which he is well on his way to achieving!

Three other participants have completed their TAFE courses, with two completing Certificate I courses and another completing Certificate II in Vocational Pathways. These courses have assisted them in building literacy and numeracy skills related to employment.

Another two participants have just started study, with one working on her Year 10 equivalency (ROSA) and another starting her Certificate III in Retail and work experience with a local retail outlet. The ROSA course will enable them to enrol into further study in the Animal Care industry.

Many SLES participants have undertaken work experience, with at least two of our group being offered paid employment with their host employer. We have supported many group members with job interviews and worked with Workskills in mock interview days. This gives some valuable 'real world' experience. Each month, we have practised our travel training skills in the community, researching public transport timetables and planning our travel training trips. The best part has been the days we put our plan into action and take the trip to our chosen destination.

## Vacation Care

Our vacation care grew, which is fabulous for all the kids. Making new friends can be challenging, however at vacation care, they get along well and enjoy hanging out. We have exciting adventures together off site daily which everyone thoroughly enjoys.

## GRACE'S AFTER SCHOOL SUCCESS

Grace Tattersall is a participant in Workskills in Nowra. Grace completed Year 12 in 2021 and decided in late 2022 that she was ready to look for employment but was undecided on what she wanted to pursue. Workskills worked closely with Grace to identify her abilities, customise her resume and job applications, and improve her searching and interview skills.

This has certainly paid off, as Grace successfully gained her first paid employment as an After School Care Educator! Grace explained she is enjoying her role, which is perfect for her.







# PODCASTERS

## Wanderer Festival

The Wanderer Festival is an annual celebration of music in Pambula on the Far South Coast. It has an extensive sustainability focus where all food sold from the food trucks is served on reusable and washable crockery and cutlery. Food scraps are sent to a local worm farmer and anything recyclable is recycled. The amount of rubbish that went to landfill was tiny.



Russell Doust, Katie Harris, and Paul Winson volunteered at the festival, directing people to sort their rubbish correctly and, at the front gate, assisting people to put on their entry wristbands.

They did a fantastic job and received a free ticket to a day at the festival.

## Fred's Work Anniversary

Fred, with the help of WorkAbility, gained employment at Tarra Motors 15 years ago. Fred enjoys his job, which involves locking and unlocking all cars on show, general gardening and cleaning. Fred says he loves working with Tarra Motors and hopes to continue for many years. Well done, Fred, and congratulations on your career so far!

The Disability Trust partnered with and received a grant from the Regional Youth Radio Project to develop the skills of people with disability in producing podcasts. They learned how to create content and technical skills, such as sound production, recording and editing. The Podcasters gather weekly to research material, including issues that interest them, humorous anecdotes, jokes, quizzes and wacky questions.

Noah, one of the podcasters, likes the program because "it's fun talking with other people, a nice place to hang out where everyone is friendly and respectful of everyone. I have enjoyed learning how to be a better communicator and more of an entertainer, and I like the socialness and learning about other people and what they think. It's a fun time."

One of Noah's favourite segments is "Tell Him He's Dreaming", which hears the opinions of the Podcasters on various prices of items on eBay. "Five hundred dollars for a chip packet – Tell him he's dreaming!"

Several episodes of The Bega Disability Trust Podcast can be heard on Spotify and Apple Music.



SPOTIFY

APPLE MUSIC

## Michael's Microbusiness

Michael Motbey likes to use sandpaper on wooden items, restoring objects into art. He also volunteers at Vinnies in Bega, where he can access cheap, pre-loved wooden furniture and other household items. These two areas of Michael's life combine beautifully - purchasing small, good-quality wooden items from Vinnies and getting to work with his sandpaper. Add a coat of varnish or two, and hey presto, a masterpiece. Michael resells his restored works monthly at the local Bemboka Hub and Candelo Markets.

Michael has diversified his microbusiness to include potted plants raised from seed. He recycles metal tins as seedling pots, moving them into decorative posts when they are mature enough and putting them up for sale.



## TAIKO DRUMMING



The Disability Trust's Bega Valley team supported the local Taiko Drumming Group, Stone Wave Taiko, to obtain a grant for an all-abilities Taiko workshop in November 2022. Marching to their own beat, this was a huge hit (boom tish!). Taiko delivers a physical workout and the tremendous booming sound of the drums. It's a great way for people to express themselves without having to use words.

Those who participated in the workshop enjoyed the opportunity, so the team decided to continue the partnership into 2023. They formed a weekly group where people could learn skills and enjoy the Big Noise that is Taiko.

Term 4 of 2023 saw the group expand into an inclusive community program joined by other community members, developing relationships each week.



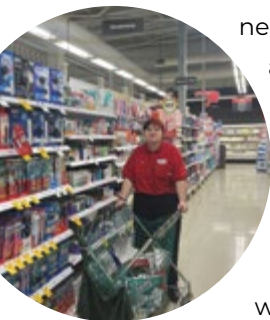
## Layla's Success Story

Layla left high school last year and enjoys taking photos and creating digital art. She likes routine and enjoys setting up things in a visually appealing way.

Layla was unsure what work she would like to do and decided to try a short work experience trial at Coles in Eden. Layla needed some support on the job and learning to catch public transport to work, which she has now built her confidence in. She was offered a job at the supermarket and takes pride in her work, assisting with customer enquiries and presenting the shelves. She loves belonging to a team and has gained new skills through training provided by her employer.

With the support of the Bega NDIS team and Workability, Layla is thriving at Coles and is trying out new activities to make new friends after leaving school.

"I like my job because I meet different people and learn a lot of new things, and the staff are helpful when I have any questions," she said.



## Culinary Connection

Culinary Connection is an initiative of the Bega Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program designed to support participants with preparing low-cost healthy meals, improving life skills and developing social connections. Under the guidance of Dina, a qualified baker and pastry chef, the group comes together each fortnight and enjoys preparing a meal together, learning new skills and building their connection. All the participants have excelled, growing in confidence, and are excited to put their new skills to use. At the end of the lesson, the group gathers at the dining table to enjoy their creations, chat and laugh.

Dina was thrilled with the program. "Culinary Connections has given me the opportunity to help guide the group, teaching them new skills, and to support their confidence in cooking and social interaction. My aim is to guide the group in a positive way and with a smile, we have a great little group that I hope will continue."

Krissy enthused: "I love the cooking group and look forward to attending each fortnight. We learn to cook healthy meals and enjoy eating together and being with new friends. I hope the group continues forever."

Megan added: "I think that the cooking group has been beneficial for all of us. I have made new friends, learnt to cook healthy food and we all have a great time together."



## Chris Draws on his Talents

Several years ago, Chris Wright discovered he had a gift for painting.

He began drawing Disney characters and switched to still life paintings with flowers. Last year, he bravely entered some of his work in the Plethora of Postcards exhibition at the Bega Valley Spiral Gallery. All his entries were sold during that exhibition.

His sense of mastery, combined with the positive feedback obtained through the sale of his work, has given him a greater sense of pride and confidence, which has spread to all areas of his life.

In October, Chris had a solo exhibition at Inkwell Studios in Bega entitled "Flowers". We were so impressed by his work, we purchased a piece that is now proudly displayed at the Bega Office.

Chris is now honing his skills in painting birds and landscapes.

Workability participant Andrew Radford has been with The Disability Trust for 20 years and employed at the Batemans Bay Library for 20 years.

## ANDREW'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Andrew's most significant accomplishment this year was completing a

12-month Animal Care course at TAFE. Andrew is a strong advocate for people living with disability, working closely with Aspect to help them deliver a film about autism awareness. In 2024, Andrew is going to Perth to work with Spectrum Space, an innovative community organisation, to provide people on the autism spectrum opportunities to develop and display their strengths.

Andrew thoroughly enjoys working with the team at The Disability Trust, recently stating he "feels supported to be the best he can be".

## Stylish Studio

Early in 2023, The Disability Trust purchased a property near Surf Beach to open a second supported accommodation service in Batemans Bay. As well as the main house, there is a self-contained studio on the property, enabling us to offer a mix of accommodation options based on support needs. The main house and the studio have had extensive renovations to improve access and functionality.

The main house will offer three-person shared accommodation with 24/7 staffing support. The studio unit will offer an individualised living arrangement with drop-in support for someone to live independently. We have a client who will be moving into the studio and working toward their goal of living independently. We have been supporting her to get ready through our Transitional Living program at Moruya and she is super excited about setting up the studio in her style.







## TENPIN BOWLING

# WITH STEVEN MALMO

Steven Malmo loves tenpin bowling and was all smiles after his first competition with the South Coast Special Olympics team in August. Steven joined around 200 NSW competitors in the singles and doubles events at the State Championships at Campbelltown City Bowl. Each competitor played against someone of a similar ability despite being new or experienced bowlers. Steven brought home a silver medal in the singles event, while in doubles, he and his partner won bronze – a truly fantastic achievement!

Steven's efforts received a special mention in State Parliament by local MP Dr Michael Holland. His Community Recognition Statement mentioned Steven while congratulating the South Coast Special Olympics Club. Steven and his family were super proud of his Parliamentary mention. We have no doubt he'll be heading off to more competitions.

## Everyone Loves a Christmas Party

The team at Batemans Bay hosted a festive Christmas in July event where everyone loved getting dressed up. There were lots of red and green Santa and reindeer costumes. Christmas songs rocked at high volume and everyone enjoyed a few rounds of Christmas trivia. It was unanimous that the best part of the event was the Christmas food, prepared by our very own chef, Will Hardman, with everyone joining in to help him. The menu included honey-glazed ham, roast pork, vegetables and all the Christmas trimmings.

Everyone laughed through the Christmas poppers and groaned at the jokes, wearing themed hats, headbands and jewellery.



## Fishing with Jack

Robert, who likes to be called Jack, lives in a residential aged care facility and enjoys getting out and about chatting with others close to his age. Jack is learning to control his power wheelchair, which will help him get out and about and achieve his current goals to socialise in the community. Jack is enjoying fishing and is planning a supported day trip to Canberra to visit his family next month.

## Reunion with a Friend

Mathew McLennan writes ... On Thursday, 28 September 2023, I got to catch up with Martine after not seeing each other for more than five years. We had kept in contact via letters, and I would send Martine a calendar with a sun sign guide every year and a Christmas card.

We went to Surf Beach Café for lunch and coffee with Lynne Koerbin, Martine's sister, Maylu, and Martine's carer, Henny. We got to walk through The Disability Trust's new Supported Independent Living house, which is nearly complete and almost ready for participants to move in. All of us had a wonderful day.

I met Martine in 2008 during a respite holiday and during the holiday it was Martine's birthday. I gave her a mystery gift called an electronic bubble wrap sensory toy which after 100 clicks would make a funny noise. We instantly became friends. Martine has an innate talent for music and is like a music encyclopedia – you can play part of a song and Martine will tell you what the song is and who wrote it. Over the years, many times I would catch the Friday afternoon bus to Bermagui for weekends away returning on the bus on a Sunday or Monday morning.

Also, we would catch up when Martine's family came to Batemans Bay for shopping trips and Martine and I would hang out and chill to a music channel on Foxtel at my apartment while her family did the shopping.

It is great to have this friendship between Martine and myself.



## JASMINE BLOOMS



Jasmine has come a long way in building her skills this year. She has joined several social groups and enjoys the monthly Saturday Nights Out, Games and Out and About groups. These activities have encouraged Jasmine to expand her friendships and improve her confidence in interacting with others.

Jasmine is passionate about cooking and is building on her independent living skills. She is part of the weekly cooking group that operates out of the Batemans Bay office and attends a Supported Transitional Accommodation program for two nights every fortnight in Moruya. This builds her confidence in learning to live more independently as she works towards her goal of moving out of her family home.





## ● Hunter



This year, we have enjoyed connecting as a team and with the broader community to celebrate diversity and inclusion through several events.

# A year of connection and growth

The Hunter has had an exciting year of coming together to look ahead. The Hunter services are four years old and ready to expand the great work we do in creating opportunities for our participants and staff.

### The Last Daughter Screening

The Hunter was honoured to host a screening of the Australian award-winning film *The Last Daughter*, based on a book by Brenda Matthews. Joining a host of clients and employees who attended the screening was Brenda's mother – also a Brenda! *The Last Daughter* is a documentary about Brenda's journey, part of the Stolen Generation, to unearth the truth about her past and to reconcile the two sides of her family.

### Pride Event

We held a huge Pride event at our office in Argenton. Everyone got into the spirit and dressed in rainbow colours. The team also did a great job of dressing up the office.





Vince lives in one of our SIL homes, where he has a real passion for his garden, growing vegetables and fruit trees. Vince sells some produce to the local neighbourhood. He has made a sign and proudly sells to passersby. He is enterprising and is always looking for a new venture to make money. Another example is cashing in cans for his neighbourhood. The neighbours leave their cans near their letterboxes, and Vince does his weekly collection.



## NEXT STEP PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Maddy has joined our team as a SLES Facilitator, working with several participants with a goal of employment. The Hunter Next Step program's first participant, Ethan, has found it very beneficial as it has helped him obtain his RSA and RCG qualifications. While Ethan has been with Next Step, he has also obtained his provisional licence. This has given him more confidence and motivation to participate in the program and other aspects of his life. Ethan will continue to participate in the Next Step program, hoping to find his dream job in the hospitality industry.

### Eric enjoying life at new home

Eric has recently moved into one of our Hunter SIL homes after an extended stay in hospital. He has seven children and nine grandchildren, enjoys a laugh and anything sweet to eat! Eric is a St George Illawarra Dragons NRL supporter and is a Queenslander when it comes to the State of Origin. Eric enjoys having a good chat with staff and always has a joke. He feels fortunate to be in his home and feels supported well. He enjoys movie time with his housemates and thinks all the food is excellent.



### R U OK? Day

Mental health is close to our hearts in the Hunter. We held a picnic in the park at Speers Point on a beautiful, sunny day in September to encourage us all to stop, say hi and ask how someone is going. Our clients came with their picnic lunch, chatted and had the chance to ride our CycleAbility bikes and trikes.





## ● Sydney

### Sport and Rec Across Sydney

Sport and Recreation programs in Sydney vary from centre-based activities to community access.

Across our Miranda, Campbelltown and Oran Park offices, Sydney offers a range of Sport and Recreation programs aimed to improve the health and well-being of participants as well as enhancing their knowledge of different activities. Participants in each centre-based program develop their fitness, creative and independent skills. These skills, combined with their interests, reflect the variety of sport and recreation programs available, including cooking, art, photography, and theatre groups.

Sydney also offers a Learner Driver program that teaches the road rules and other essential skills. At night, you can hear laughter and music filling the offices with social groups taking over, giving everyone involved the space to socialise and have fun together.

Community access programs are developed based on the participant's interests. One day, you could be delivering amazing vocals at karaoke. Other times, you could be watching live bands, having a meal together, going on cruises or day trips. The aim is to be involved in fun outings where everyone gets to socialise in the community in the day or night!



### Jason and Thomas' Newfound Independence

Jason and Thomas lived in a group home with two others in Ruse, sharing their joys and challenges, but as time passed, they began to dream of independence and their own villas.

With his friendly demeanour and passion for football, Jason often spoke about having his own place where he could grow more independent. On the other hand, Thomas was a budding chef and he dreamt of a kitchen where he could cook up his culinary creations without any restrictions.

After talking with Support Workers, they decided to turn their dreams into reality. They were approached by their Team Leader, Ingi, who advised there were two vacant units available at another Supported Independent Living site in Chester Hill if they wanted to move into more independent villas within the same community.

Staff were initially concerned about their ability to live independently, but Jason and Thomas were determined. Jason was saving money from his part-time job at the local café and Thomas learnt essential skills like budgeting, cooking and home maintenance. After months of hard work and

preparation, they found the perfect villas. Jason's place had a spacious room for his football posters and memorabilia. Thomas' villa featured a well-equipped kitchen where he could experiment with new recipes.

Excitement and a little anxiety filled the air the day they moved in. Their families, friends and the Chester Hill and Ruse teams gathered to celebrate this milestone. With beaming smiles, Jason and Thomas unlocked the doors to their new homes, feeling a sense of accomplishment they had never known before.

Life in their independent villas has its challenges, but they have thrived with determination, mutual support and help from both teams. Thomas began hosting weekly dinner parties, showcasing his culinary talents. Now, the five residents gather in the central kitchen most Sundays for a shared meal and a good time.

Chester Hill has obtained a vegetable garden where Thomas has shown great interest and is growing his own fruit and vegetables, which he includes with his home-cooked meals for his friends.

Jason and Thomas achieved their dreams and became role models for others in the community, proving that independence was within reach with determination and support.

Their journey from the group home to more independent villas was a testament to friendship, resilience and the power of believing in yourself.



# KELLY BULL'S JOURNEY INTO RAGLAN

“Kelly is the best she’s been in a long time living here,” said proud brother Wayne.

[Click here to watch Kelly’s story](#)

Kelly was in hospital for a year after a stroke and seizure, which caused her to be bed-bound, and neurologists said she would likely never walk or even weight-bear again.

After the stroke, Kelly was supported by her brother Wayne and mum Beverley to move into one of our homes, Raglan, in South East Sydney. Weighing only 34kg, she was extremely malnourished and relied on taking eight scheduled medications daily due to being in such pain.

With the support and encouragement from the SIL team, Allied Health team and her family, as well as Kelly’s strong will, she is now weighing 65kg, does not require any pain medication and is living her best life.

Kelly has made new friends within the SIL home and surrounding group homes and enjoys spending time with them, catching up for coffee or lunch and attending shows and concerts with them.

To the surprise of her neurologist, Kelly now can weight-bear for a few seconds, sit up on her own and do fortnightly exercises with an exercise physiologist to transition into her wheelchair unassisted.



Miranda Art Group started a mural earlier this year to acknowledge First Nations culture and inclusion.

Members of the group, their families and staff celebrated the mural’s progress on May 30. One of the artists’ family members, Gerald Duncan, from Biripi Country, joined the festivities and gave a Welcome to Country.

Each artist had the opportunity to showcase their part of the mural and explain the inspiration and meaning behind their work.

After a break during the cooler months, the Art Group restarted their work on the mural. The mural will be showcased at the Miranda on-site Art Exhibition alongside other artworks created by the group in late 2023.

# ART GROUP



# ALICE IN WONDERLAND

South East Sydney Theatre Group puts on an energetic and talented production every year. The group performed their rendition of Alice In Wonderland in October at GyMEA Tradies. In August, the Theatre Group received a club grant from GyMEA Tradies covering the room hire for the performance.

Full of imagination, the performance combined a live show and a movie presentation. Behind the scenes, the movie production was an involved process with group members and production staff working tirelessly across two terms, with member Barbara illustrating the invite. Parts of the production were filmed in front of a green screen in the small recreation room at the Miranda office. Often singing to an absent partner, performers had to use their creative power to tell the story.

**Congratulations on a fantastic performance to everyone involved!**





## Christmas in July Dinner

South East Sydney's Cooking Group prepared a feast and celebrated Christmas with their friends and family in July. After months of hard work, learning new skills and experimenting with cooking techniques, the chefs held a small event and cooked for their loved ones!

They worked with the team to plan a three-course menu, assigning tasks and prepping desserts leading up to the feast. There was lots of chopping, peeling, mixing, mashing, steaming and cooking various elements of the meals while keeping on top of the kitchen clean-up.

The group were beaming with pride while working together and serving their guests. The space was decorated with Christmas cheer and filled with laughter.

## SLES Starts in Oran Park

This year, The Disability Trust expanded its School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) and Sport and Recreation programs into Oran Park in Sydney's South West. Our Sydney team noticed a gap in services for youth with disability in the Camden region. With The Disability Trust's vision being 'to create an inclusive world, where people with a disability can live the life they choose', the team saw an opportunity to create programs to assist the Camden youth in upskilling in a supported environment.

SLES has operated successfully in Miranda and Campbelltown for several years, promoting activities such as resume-building, interview preparation and communication techniques. The service is crucial in supporting youth with disability in achieving their employment goals.



The Sydney SLES team have been busy networking with Oran Park businesses. They have successfully placed two participants at Woolworths in Oran Park for work experience and another at Planet Fitness, where they receive hands-on learning experiences that support them to develop their life and work skills, as well as their pathway to employment.

The Disability Trust is excited to provide employment services to the youth of Camden. The increase in service will help teenagers and young adults feel supported and encourage them to achieve their personal, work and life goals.





## Reinhard's Trusted Travel Journey



Reinhard is a big movie lover and collector of DVDs. After looking through the various holidays in the Trusted Travel brochure, he was delighted to see a trip to the USA. Overwhelmed at the thought of seeing how his favourite movies were made,

travelling to Universal Studios and Warner Bros, Reinhard knew he had to go on this trip of a lifetime. The only problem was Reinhard needed a passport.

Born in Germany with no citizenship record, Reinhard had problems previously obtaining a passport due to a lack of identification. After being diagnosed with his medical condition, Reinhard had his driver's licence removed.

Initially, we thought Reinhard would need a German passport, so we made an appointment at the German Embassy in Woolloomooloo. However, the staff then spoke with Reinhard's daughter Sascha and sister Karin, who were supportive and amazing. Karin provided her brother's original birth book, and Sascha provided a part of the citizenship that Reinhard's father

obtained in 1967, which listed Reinhard as his child.

The birth book shared by Karin was translated into Reinhard's birth certificate, approved by the translator of Service NSW Multicultural Language Services.

Working with Sascha, the team logged a request for citizenship through Homeland Affairs, which again was denied due to lack of identification.

To proceed and get the passport, the team persevered, uploading Reinhard's translated birth certificate and having Reinhard's doctor and employer sign off on identification photos and documentation.

The last step was for a staff member with citizenship, who had known Reinhard for more than a year, to make one more identity declaration – a big thanks to Disability Support Worker, Deb Cambourn. This was enough to get the citizenship approval over the line.

Reinhard and the team took the translated birth and citizenship certificate into Service NSW and obtained a photo card. This was the last essential element in getting the elusive passport. Reinhard is now waiting for the photo card to arrive in the mail any day and is looking forward to his long-awaited holiday to the United States of America.

## Liam's Success

The Mittagong SLES team congratulates Liam on successfully gaining employment with McDonald's at Mittagong.

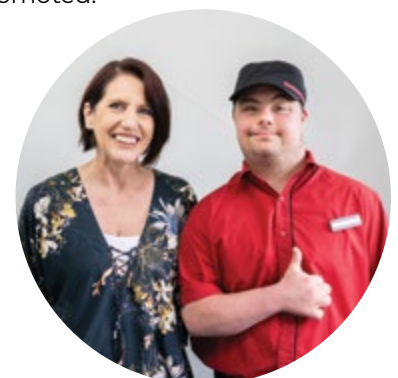
Liam has wanted to work at McDonald's since he joined the SLES in 2021 and has put a lot of work into building his resilience, learning about teamwork and increasing his skills in resume writing and interview techniques.

Liam's confidence has grown through his time at SLES, and he can now confidently and respectfully interact with co-workers and supervisors.

"This year, I started my first job at McDonald's," he said. "I have learnt how to work in a team environment,

be careful and do things correctly. I have met some nice people. I would like to keep improving and learn how to work in the kitchen, cooking the fries and burgers. I would like to increase my shifts and possibly work full-time and get promoted."

Liam proudly wears his uniform when attending SLES and is committed to both SLES and his work. He has been doing a spectacular job of juggling both commitments, which are vital to him.



**'Life has its ups and downs',**  
as the saying goes.

The phrase turned out to be an especially appropriate title for the recent stage performance by the Southern Highlands' Club Trust Drama Group after the production ended up being 18 months in the making due to many setbacks, including COVID lockdown restrictions.

But to quote another often used saying, 'the show must go on', and thanks to the dedication and determination of the cast and crew, it did so with a bang!

Drama Group teacher, Mandy was delighted: "I was so proud of the cast of Harriett, Harrison, Sophie and Cameron. The performance took countless hours of rehearsal, script writing, sourcing material and sheer determination."

Even rain on the day of the performance couldn't deter 25 people from attending The Venue in Bowral to see the cast take the stage for *Ups and Downs*.

After the show, the cast was more than happy to answer audience questions about the performance, including the preparation for the show and standing in front of a group of people.

Another highlight of the show was an exhibition of works by the Southern Highlands Art Group, which displayed paintings in the foyer. Work by this group of talented artists has been featured recently in the local media and The Disability Trust's *Stories from the Trust* newsletter. The paintings were available for \$40, with all proceeds going to the artist. Some awe-inspiring pieces were on display, with six selling on the day.

Joshua approached Workskills, wanting to work but needed help finding a position. Feeling like personal barriers hindered him, he discussed his employment goals which involved wanting regular and routine work and getting his licence.

Workskills approached Mittagong RSL, creating an opportunity as a kitchen hand. After a year and a half, Joshua is regularly complimented about his work ethic and is now training new workers. Joshua has earned his licence and now has a car, which he is very proud of.

## Joshua's Opportunity



**DRAMA**  
**THE SHOW MUST GO ON**





## Goulburn



### SLES at Divall's

The Goulburn School Leaver Employment Supports group were lucky enough to experience a day with Divall's Earthmoving and Bulk Haulage. Divall's is a large, inclusive company with extensive machinery and equipment.

The group was able to experience a virtual reality simulation of an excavator with authentic movement and controls, and then see the life-size equipment they had just loaded a truck with.

The SLES group learnt about the different types of industries and roles explained to the group first-hand by staff and through visual aids.

These include mechanics, excavator operators, truck drivers, welders and parts warehouse operators.

The SLES group had a wonderful day, learning and having fun. Thanks to Divall's for the incredible learning opportunity.

### Joyce's Garden Story

My name is Joyce and gardening is my favourite hobby, and I think my garden is the best place in my house. I can spend many hours every day working in my garden, and being there makes me feel fresh and happy. I got interested in gardening because of my mother and grandmother.

My garden contains different types of plants. For instance, it has different flowers such as pansies, marigolds, geraniums, carnations, chrysanthemums and petunias. These flowers are the easiest to grow and flourish in the environment with their beautiful smells. Moreover, the colours of these flowers make a garden look beautiful.

In my vegetable garden, I am growing radishes, brussel sprouts, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes and strawberries. I use vegetables from my garden to prepare delicious meals in my house which everyone enjoys.

My garden of flowers is also my garden of thoughts and dreams. The thoughts grow as freely as the flowers and the dreams are as beautiful.



Daniel achieved his goal of learning to use the public bus to go sightseeing around Goulburn.

## DANIEL'S BUS TRIP

The bus ride was approximately 40 minutes around Goulburn. Daniel particularly enjoyed driving past his house and waving as he went by. On the way back through the main street, the bus stopped in front of KFC and Daniel had a photo taken in front of the building. He got to meet new people, chat and joke with them.

Daniel had a great time on this bus adventure and now has an activity he has always wanted to do ticked off his bucket list, with many photos to remember his experience.

Once the bus trip finished, Daniel purchased his afternoon tea and returned to the Goulburn office, where he told everyone about his experience and how great it was. He printed off his pictures to show everyone and take home. He recently asked staff when he can go on the bus again.



## NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week is celebrated every year in July. NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee and is celebrated to recognise the history, culture and achievements of Indigenous Australians.

Amylee is Indigenous and NAIDOC Week is important as a time to celebrate her culture, heritage and achievements.

During NAIDOC Week, Amylee completed an Aboriginal piece of art using symbols describing stories of cultural significance and to preserve culture and tradition.

It was important for Amylee to create the painting to express her identity, culture, spirituality and relationships with Country.

Through Amylee's painting, her fellow housemates felt they had learnt a little more about her culture.



## William's Success at Goulburn Workers Club

William is a friendly, chatty and happy young man who wants to work around people. Feeling like it would be a good fit for William, Workskills approached the Goulburn Workers Club to see if any employment opportunities were available.

Together, the Goulburn Workers Club and Workskills focused on William's abilities and talents, how they can

be utilised and in what role. From this, William started as a Customer Service Attendant. He has excelled in the role and genuinely become a part of the team with compliments from patrons and staff on his warm and welcoming demeanour, service, and cheeky smile. William has been employed for over a year now with the Goulburn Workers Club and remains supported by Workskills in his journey.



The ACT and Queanbeyan team have had a busy year, consolidating their programs and reflecting on best practices across the variety of services they provide.

## SLES Success

The focus for School Leaver Employment Supports this year has been on building community engagement and gaining work experience. Those in SLES have been incredibly successful working towards their group and individual goals.

The team has continued strengthening our relationship with Lids4Kids, a not-for-profit organisation minimising plastic waste by collecting plastic lids and upcycling them into new products such as benches and sensory items. Lids4Kids have given the team at SLES fantastic opportunities to contribute to a significant project through colour and polymer sorting, as well as work experience assisting in administrative roles, cooking and money handling at their monthly Bunnings BBQ fundraisers.

One SLES participant, Samuel Millman has a goal to build his circle of support to minimise the risk of social isolation after leaving school, working towards gaining work experience and employment. Samuel has attained a wealth of experience working with dogs at the ACT Domestic Animal Services and as a volunteer usher at The Street Theatre.

Joshua Devan has been in SLES since March with a goal to find meaningful work that he is comfortable in and enjoys. Joshua began this journey at The Cook Grocer. Joshua completed work experience there for six weeks before deciding to trial another form of work experience. Joshua has been working towards finding work in the music industry where he can share his vibrant personality and drumming expertise with others.

Megan's primary challenges coming to SLES were her compliance with decision-making and personal autonomy. Through encouraging Megan to advocate for herself, her confidence in the community has grown drastically.

The colour-sorting activities at Lids4Kids have proven beneficial for Megan, working on her fine motor skills and cognitive recognition. Megan is finalising an open employment opportunity as an Assistant Music Educator working with toddlers and babies, acting, singing, and dancing as they are introduced to music for the first time.

One of the best parts of SLES has been watching the relationships in the group grow. They are all incredibly close and will catch up outside of SLES to hang out and go to the movies, demonstrating their newfound independence in the community and the strength of their bonds.





# SPORT & RECREATION

Sport and Recreation programs across the region have had many adventures this year with camps being a big hit.

Notably, **Score Raiders** have continued to grow, playing an intricate part of their journey to deliver inclusive services.

The ACT and Queanbeyan team continues to focus on best practice and inclusion as we move into 2024.







# Snowy Monaro

## The Culinary Talents of Chef Club

The culinary artists in the Snowy Monaro Chef Club prepare meals every Wednesday that cater to everyone's dietary requirements. They serve delicious meals to the staff at the Cooma office at a small price, allowing them to enjoy a yummy lunch or to take the meal home.

The group's main goal is to develop their skills and become more confident and independent in the kitchen environment.



## Let's Bowl

Our Cooma Tenpin Bowling team, David, Ian, and Kyle, travel to compete in the Canberra Bowling League every Saturday.



This fantastic group of young men share a common passion for bowling. What a commitment it is to leave Cooma every week on Saturday morning to travel 1.5 hours to Canberra Bowl and then return home.

The competition includes 14 teams from the Canberra region, except for our Snowy Monaro team. In the 2022 comp, our team finished in the top five.

2023 might be our year, with our team currently sitting in second position!

We are all so proud of their achievement and can't wait to see where they end up on the final leaderboard.

The players get to trial for the national team, and Ian travelled to Adelaide this year to compete. Ian and David are enthusiastic about qualifying for the 2024 Nationals and are putting in plenty of training.



# SPECIAL OLYMPICS CHAMPIONS

Kristian and Kyle competed in the 2023 Snow Australia Multiclass and Special Olympics Championships jointly run by Special Olympics Australia and NSW Interschools in August at Perisher Valley. Both achieved excellent division results, with Kristian winning gold and Kyle a bronze medal. Go Sandercoe boys!



## Support for Salvos

Veronica is in her element when volunteering at our local Salvation Army store and loves the days she gets to build on her employment skills and goals. Over the past few years, The Salvation Army has relocated several times and Veronica has volunteered at them all – a true testament to her adaptability and resilience!

The Disability Trust in Cooma is passionate about supporting The Salvation Army with their Red Shield Appeal each year. Our participants happily wear the red Salvation Army apron and set up in the Centennial Plaza Shopping Centre, collecting donations from the community to help those in need.



## Mick Moves to SIL

What a journey Michael and his family have endured to reach his goal of moving into Supported Independent Living (SIL).

Michael's mum is ageing, and her health concerns brought on an increased worry about what would happen to him as the years go on.

We worked alongside NDIS and Michael's family to trial Short Term Accommodation (STA) at one of our sites to see how he and his mum would handle being apart.

It was a hard adjustment for them, but it also opened up some great opportunities.

We started with one night a week, which turned into two and Michael recently moved into one of our SIL properties full-time.

Michael loves living with his housemates, helping around the house and completing his tasks. He feels he has the best of both worlds because he also visits his mum regularly during the week.

Michael's family are so grateful he is settled and happy in his new home.





## Snuggles for Noah

Noah has recently started at Snuggles Pet Resort in Michelago. With a passion for working with animals, Noah thoroughly enjoys his new job and is working towards his 13-week outcome. His boss, Noel, has given Noah great feedback about how fast he has settled in and is already one of the best employees at Snuggles.

WorkAbility has supported Noah by updating his resume, providing support towards gaining several employment opportunities, and purchasing work pants and shoes.



## Lee's Lodging to Logging

Lee has become part of the furniture at Rodwell Logging Pty Ltd and has almost reached his 52-week milestone. Before starting work at Rodwell Logging, Lee didn't have a place to stay and was sleeping on his friend's couch. Lee is now renting his own apartment, working on his own mental health and strengthening his relationships with his family.

WorkAbility has supported Lee with developing a resume and finding employment, and by offering his employer a wage and training subsidy.

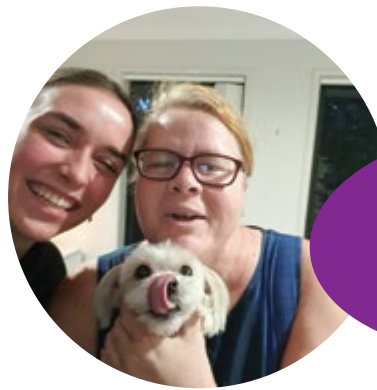
## South East Queensland

This year has seen steady growth in South East Queensland, with increasing services, support, staff, and client numbers.

Servicing an average of 138 hours a week, 28 dedicated staff have contributed to The Disability Trust South East Queensland's growing reputation and footprint recognition across Gold Coast and Brisbane.

One of the many goals for The Trust in the area was the need to connect locally within the community. Manager of services in South East Queensland, Theresa Perry, attended many expos and community-based events, connecting with the community, building relationships with support coordination and explaining the services and supports offered out of the region.

We now have Individualised Support, In-Home Care, Community Access, and Sport and Recreation services, including Score Bears available. The variety of services helps provide the people we support to live the life they choose through choice and control.



THANK YOU FROM  
**PETINA**

My name is Petina, and I live on the Gold Coast. I've had disabilities for most of my life. From 2015, due to personal injuries, I struggled with everyday life and tasks. I found myself struggling with my mental health and sinking into quite a reclusive lifestyle. I've had numerous companies come into my life over the years, which I am thankful for, however it was The Disability Trust who have slotted right into my life and supported and encouraged me to be the person I am today.

I'm quite a social butterfly. I enjoy having a laugh and spending time with my family and my friend, Shazzy, and thanks to my wonderful carers, I am able to do this regularly. Not only do they support me physically but also mentally and emotionally.

I feel confident to make choices, speak up for myself and ask for help. I can now attend all of my allied health appointments, whereas before I never did and as a result, I am in control of my health and feel on top of the world.

## TESTIMONIALS



Hi, Theresa! It's Denise from Bougainvillea Lodge. I was just ringing to let you

know. I'm very very happy with Rebecca that came last night and today I welcomed back Danielle, so I had a lovely day, I just thought to let you know your staff are wonderful, Bye, Thank you."

"Hello everyone, I just wanted to tell you that yesterday Peyton showed such professionalism during such a difficult and distressing day. I knew that my mind was already removed from my body from the beginning. I wanted to try and get accommodation and I was so

scarred by my first accom I wanted to look at them all in person. Peyton waited hours while I walked around, got lost and eventually ended up back in the same place and booked the hotel that she had first suggested. I wanted to come back to my body but I couldn't. Near the end Peyton got me to make a plan even though I didn't want to participate. Then she just talked to me. Before I knew it, I came back and even though it didn't last long, it was at least a glimmer that perhaps I would be able to come back again. Sometimes we meet people who are exceptional in their profession and this definitely describes Peyton."







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Bruce ACT 2617

**Batemans Bay**

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Batemans Bay NSW 2536

**Bega**

156 Newtown Road,  
Bega NSW 2550

**Campbelltown**

28 Broughton Street,  
Campbelltown NSW 2560

**Cooma**

Suite 3 Centennial Plaza,  
114-128 Sharp Street,  
Cooma NSW 2630

**Goulburn**

124 Auburn Street,  
Goulburn NSW 2580

**Hunter**

3 Elizabeth St,  
Argenton 2284

**Miranda**

248 The Boulevarde,  
Miranda NSW 2228

**Mittagong**

4 Albert Street,  
Mittagong NSW 2575

**Nowra**

108B Kinghorne Street,  
Nowra NSW 2541

**Queanbeyan**

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*...creating an inclusive world*

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